CbC to Nov. 21

November 15 Su Reading B319 — Jeremiah 29 — Seeking Welfare **Audio: Jer. 29 (ESV)**

Competing Letters — There are two letters mentioned in this chapter, one of hope and the other of rebellion. The first letter was written by Jeremiah to the exiles in Babylon. It was a positive message from God about how they should live there for the next 70 years. They should build houses, plant gardens, marry, and multiply for their own benefit (vv. 5-6). Then, somewhat unexpectedly, they were also told to "*seek the welfare of the city*" of Babylon (v. 7). The captives were to work for the good of the captors. That is not natural but something that would come only from God. Jesus came to earth with the same kind of message: "*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you*" (Luke 6:27). That kind of love is not natural either, but it is the God-designed approach. The word translated "*welfare*" in verse 7 ("*seek the welfare of the city*") is the Hebrew word *shalōm* [peace], the same word used in verse 11 about God's plans for His people: "…*plans for welfare … to give you a future and a hope*." They were to seek the *shalōm* of Babylon in order to find their own *shalōm* from God. The second letter was written by Shemaiah, a leader who remained in Jerusalem and was reorganizing the priests and prophets (v. 24). He replaced the God-appointed high priest with his own choice and demanded that Jeremiah be punished (v. 27). Instead, Shemaiah would be punished because God said, "*he has spoken rebellion against the LORD*" (v.32). The first letter contained the superb wisdom of God; the second letter involved only the faulty wisdom of man.
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November 16 M Reading B320 — Jeremiah 30 — Not Left Unpunished **Audio: Jer. 30 (ESV)**

Significant Days — Four times in this chapter, God referred to significant days in Judah's future. In chronological order, the first was a day of *judgment* for them: "*That day … is a time of distress for Jacob*" (v. 7). They would be severely punished but not destroyed. God said, "*of you I will not make a full end. I will discipline you in just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished … because your guilt is great*" (v. 11, 14). Next in time was a day of *freedom*. Speaking about Nebuchadnezzar, God said, "*I will break his yoke from off your neck, and I will burst your bonds*" (v. 8). The third was a day of *restoration*: "…*days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah … and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers*" (v. 3). Later, He said, "*I will restore health to you … I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob*" (vv. 17, 18). The restoration was declared to be complete by saying, "*you shall be my people … and I will be your God*" (v. 22). The last of these significant days was a day of *understanding*: "*In the latter days you will understand this*" (v. 24). On that kind of day, one looks back on lessons learned. God often takes Christian people through similar "days." When we get off track in a significant way for an extended time, He may discipline us in a painful way. In that way, He may break the chains of bondage in which we have entangled ourselves and then lead us back into a relationship of love and protection with Him. Why go through that unnecessary process? We have a whole Bible full of examples to help us avoid that painful process. Why not just stay in His way, loving and serving Him faithfully and joyfully?
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November 17 Tu Reading B321 — Jeremiah 31 — They Shall Come Back **Audio: Jer. 31 (ESV)**

Visions — The first 25 verses of this chapter were given to Jeremiah by means of a vision as suggested in verse 26 when he said, "*At this I awoke and looked, and my sleep was pleasant to me.*" It was a vision with three main subjects. The vision was one of *God's love*. God said, "*I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you*" (v. 3). Love is marked by always being faithful. Later, He said of His people, "*my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him*" (v. 20). The heart of love always wants to help. Another part of the vision was Israel's

unity. I was struck by the many times in this chapter the northern tribes of Israel were included with Judah in the promises for the future, when "*all the clans of Israel … shall be my people*" (v. 1). The mountains of Samaria and the hill country of Ephraim (vv. 5-6) were in the northern kingdom. Twice, God called out, "*O virgin Israel!*" (vv. 4, 21). The final part of the vision was the "*new covenant*," a term used only here in the OT. It was promised for a time in the future, primarily for the age following the coming of the Messiah, when this covenant would be written on hearts instead of scrolls (v. 33) and "*they shall all know me*" (v. 34). We are living in that time right now, when God's people know Him personally, not just knowing about Him. We are also loved by His everlasting love and held together in unity. It is a kind of heaven on earth.
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November 18 W Reading B322 — Jeremiah 32 — Buying Worthless Land **Audio:** Jer. 32 (ESV)

Restored with Joy — Jeremiah was in prison because of his negative prophecies (v. 2), Jerusalem was under siege with earthen ramps being built toward the walls (v. 24), and King Zedekiah was in his tenth year of reign (v. 1), one year away from its end. Rather unexpectedly, God predicted to Jeremiah that his cousin, Hanamel, would come to ask him to buy his property (v. 8). That happened, and the purchase was handled in a careful, legal way (vv. 9-11). Why buy property when the land would be conquered by Babylon and become worthless to the legal owner? It was another one of God's symbolic object lessons, showing that Jews would again own land in Judah (v. 15). Jeremiah would never regain ownership of that property because he would die in Egypt where he was taken against his will. God said that He had to punish Judah "*because of all the evil … they did to provoke me to anger*" (v. 32). After that, however, God would bring them back (v. 37) and "*make with them an everlasting covenant*" (v. 40). Notice the attitude God would have in restoring them: "*I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul*" (v. 41). God punishes His people with sadness but restores them with joy.
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November 19 Th Reading B323 — Jeremiah 33 — Restored Fortunes **Audio:** Jer. 33 (ESV)

Christ's Reign — The theme of God's restored people that we saw at the end of yesterday's reading, continues throughout this chapter. An added element is emphasized here, however, which is the predicted coming of the Messiah, a descendant of David. It would be fulfilled almost 600 years later with the birth of Jesus, the divine leader whom God called "*a righteous Branch*" (v. 15). That turning point in history would be at the beginning of the Church, the people of God in whose hearts His Spirit would dwell. Christ's reign began at that time, it continues through His Church today, and it will be fulfilled completely at Christ's Second Coming and our resurrection. During the Millennial period, Christ will literally reign on earth where "*he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land*" (v. 15). The city of Jerusalem will be called "*The LORD is our righteousness*" (v. 16), the same name that was given to the Messiah (23:6), who would be ruling during that time.
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November 20 F Reading B324 — Jeremiah 34 — Proclaiming Liberty **Audio:** Jer. 34 (ESV)

Consistent Obedience — It was the beginning of the end for Jerusalem. They were under siege by Babylon when Jeremiah brought the bad news to King Zedekiah that Jerusalem would be burned (v. 2), and then the good news that he would die in peace in Babylon (vv. 3-5). Perhaps challenged by this news, Zedekiah made a formal covenant with the people that they would free all their Hebrew slaves, which they did for a short time, but then took them back again (vv. 8-11). This short-term "*proclamation of liberty*" (v. 8) would be turned around by God into a proclamation of "*liberty to the sword*" (v. 17) because of their reversed repentance. God is not impressed with short term obedience. He asks for a lifetime of faithful obedience from people who desire to always please Him.

Even when we may be living in a bad-news period of our lives, we need to stay committed to being faithful to God.
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November 21 Sa Reading B325 — Jeremiah 35 — Rechabites Obey **Audio: Jer. 35 (ESV)**

Contrast in Obedience — The origin of the Rechabites goes back to before the time of Moses. The Kenites were descendants of Rechab (1 Chron. 2:55), and Moses' father-in-law was one of them (Jud. 4:11). Although they were not Hebrews, they became attached to the Israelites in the wilderness and followed them into the Promised Land. They were dedicated people, who were willing to perpetually follow the command of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, not to drink wine, build houses, or plant crops (Jer. 35:6-7). In this chapter, God used them as a stark contrast to the disobedient Hebrews in Judah. The Rechabites refused to drink the wine offered to them by Jeremiah. They were obedient to a command given by one of their ancestors over 800 years earlier, but the Judeans refused to obey God, although He had repeatedly commanded His people, saying, "*I have spoken to you persistently, but you have not listened to me. I have sent to you all my servants the prophets, sending them persistently … But you did not incline your ear or listen to me*" (vv. 14-15, emphasis added). What a contrast in obedience! Non-Jews were obedient to their distant ancestor's command, but the Jews refused to obey God's frequently repeated command. We have similar persistent commands from God in the Bible. Will we have the Rechabites' stubborn willingness to obey them?